

Iraqi Kurd leader a 'friend' of Turkey

by UPI

IRBIL, Iraq -- Iraqi Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani told an Iraqi newspaper Wednesday he is a friend of Turkey but won't take orders about Kurdish separatists. In an interview with the Milliyet newspaper, Barzani made some conciliatory remarks about Turkey's fight with Kurdish separatists known as the PKK, but said the group didn't represent all Kurds in northern Iraq. "The PKK will either give up violence or confront not only Turkey but the whole Kurdish nation," he said. Barzani said Ankara rejected offers of talks with him in his capacity as governor of the semi-autonomous Kurdish administration in northern Iraq. "Why is Turkey's hostility toward Iraqi Kurdistan? Is it because we are the real problem in Ankara's eyes and not the PKK?" Barzani said to Milliyet. "We want assurances from Turkey that all these military measures are not against us." "I am a friend of Turkey but I don't take instructions from anyone including Turkey," Barzani said. Turkey has about 100,000 troops massed along its southern border in a bid to put down attacks on Turkey by the PKK, which considered a terror organization by the U.S. State Department.

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